



## EFL teachers' conceptualizations of their roles through metaphor analysis

Mehmet Asmalı <sup>a</sup>\*, Handan Çelik <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, School of Foreign Languages, Bandırma/Balıkesir 10200, Turkey

<sup>b</sup> Trakya University, Rectorate Foreign Languages Department, Balkan Campus, Edirne 22030, Turkey

### APA Citation:

Asmalı, M., & Çelik, H. (2017). EFL teachers' conceptualizations of their roles through metaphor analysis. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(2), 01-13.

Submission Date: 22/07/2016

Acceptance Date: 25/07/2017

### Abstract

Metaphors reflect the way people think and know the world. When they are considered within teaching profession, they can be strong agents revealing teachers' beliefs about their profession. They may also explore the meaning that teachers attach to themselves. Despite their strength to shed light on how teachers conceptualize themselves, metaphor studies seem to be limited. For this reason, this study set out to reveal what EFL teachers think about their roles through metaphorical representations. 24 EFL teachers, with varied experience in teaching, responded to a metaphor elicitation task through the statement "An English teacher is like ..... because.....". The data were analyzed with reference to the ESL teachers' role categorization provided by De Guerrero and Villamil (2000). Thus a theory-driven, deductive content analysis was employed. The analysis revealed that the data only matched with 6 out of 9 categories of De Guerrero and Villamil. Therefore, for the metaphors that did not fit in their categorization, a new category was emerged. Revealing the teachers' interpretations and philosophies regarding teaching, the metaphors within the dominant categories showed that the teachers' conceptualizations regarding their roles were more traditional and teacher-centered. The variety in metaphors suggests the multi-dynamic nature of teaching.

© 2017 JLLS and the Authors - Published by JLLS.

**Keywords:** Metaphor; English as a foreign language (EFL); teacher roles; teacher education, teachers' beliefs

## 1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that people's belief system has a certain control over how they think and behave. This conceptual system, which might sometimes be metaphorical, takes a crucial role in defining the realities happening (Pishghadam, Rajabali, & Safoora, 2009). The word 'metaphor' originally coming from a Greek word (Fenwick, 2000) helps people express their perspectives in compressed and imaginative ways (Boostrom, 1998). As important agents for the representation of people's inner world, metaphors are known as analogies letting us map one experience through the terminology of another (Ortony & Fainsilber, 1989). To a large extent, metaphors also form the way we think, experience, decide, and behave in daily life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: 0552-241-49-93  
E-mail address: [asmalimehmet@gmail.com](mailto:asmalimehmet@gmail.com)

When the meaning of metaphor is considered, it becomes easy to understand the fact that metaphorical thinking involves employing a familiar object or event as a conceptual tool to elucidate features of a more complex phenomenon or situation (Oxford, Barcelos, Harrington, Lavine, Saleh, & Longhini, 1998). However, “it is not only considered as a powerful tool of expression and a figure of speech but also an important tool of cognition and communication” (Ortony & Fainsilber, 1989, p. 181). Especially, the significant role it has in human cognition makes it an essential instrument of analysis (Oxford et al., 1998).

Considering how metaphors function, the importance they carry in education can also clearly be seen (Lin, Paichi, & Shu, 2012). They make more sense especially to fully understand teachers’ thinking when they express themselves (Munby, 1986). As Miller states (1987), acting as ‘translators’ of experience, metaphors may provide a window into the comprehension of teachers’ personal and professional experiences. However, it has always been challenging to understand nature of teaching due to several unpredictable variables, such as school environment, community culture, students, educational system, and the interaction among them. One of the most important roles played in this complex process belongs to teachers themselves. In spite of realizing a crucial role in teaching and learning process, teachers cannot be regarded as robots functioning without emotions and beliefs. Teachers’ beliefs stemming from their values and their views about the world and their position in this world influence their understandings and actions accordingly (Williams & Burden, 1997). Therefore, teachers’ beliefs have greater influence than their knowledge on lesson planning, decision making, and practicing in the classroom. Thus, analyzing the roles that teachers consider they play in class can enrich the understanding regarding dynamics in teaching (Pajares, 1992).

In case of examining teachers’ beliefs of their roles, researchers have mostly focused on cognitive representations through interviews or questionnaires which are criticized for disconnecting beliefs from real life (Barcelos, 2003). In order to overcome this criticism, teachers’ use of metaphors is suggested since metaphorical language is believed to help people express abstract and difficult concepts in concrete terms (Oksanen, 2005; Turunen, 2003). This may also provide an understanding towards teachers’ cognition and affection as they reflect how they think and know the world. Last but not the least, teachers are no exception in the widespread use of metaphor as a cognitive tool (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000).

However, researching and analyzing teachers’ roles and generalizing them to teachers of all different subjects may not fully make sense as teachers of all subjects, such as foreign language teachers, are considered and supposed to have distinguishing features compared to others. Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987) are among the ones claiming and proposing factors which make foreign language teachers different from other subject teachers. According to their suggestion, the subject itself, the interaction taking place in the class, the need to improve their knowledge about that specific subject, absence of colleagues teaching the same subject, and outside support which is needed to learn the subject matter are put forth as some of the factors creating difference between foreign language teachers and other subject teachers. The uniqueness of foreign language teachers’ roles reflected in the suggestions of Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987) requires a closer and deeper examination which stands as the point of departure for the present study. Taking this perspective into account, it might be possible to gain a clearer understanding of how teachers in different contexts consider themselves, their work, and profession.

### *1.1. Teacher roles and use of metaphors*

The use of metaphors as one of the recent tools for the analysis of teachers’ and learners’ beliefs upon teaching and learning has been getting more and more popular (Goldstein, 2005; Saban, 2004;

Saban, Kocbeker, & Saban, 2007; Wright, Sundberg, Yarbrough, Wilson, & Stallworth, 2003). Their use in educational research especially began to gain more interest when focus of researchers' shifted from a wider external context of educational practice to everyday realities of classroom (Jensen, 2006) affecting the roles teachers play.

Other factors, such as country and institution, type of course, and students also play role in formation of these roles (Brown, 2001). Considering these factors, a teacher may play several roles, such as authority, leader, director, manager, counselor, guide, friend, and parent (Brown, 2001). What roles teachers employ may change even in the eyes of students. While a teacher may be a friend for a student, the same teacher may be a dispassionate authority for another. However, regardless of the role that teachers play, it is of crucial importance for teachers to know themselves, their limitations, strengths, likes, and dislikes in order to be comfortable and consistent in their ways of behavior (Brown, 2001).

Apart from being aware of their own likes, limitations, and capabilities, teachers also need to know what kind of roles they should play in promoting students' learning and they should be willing to learn new skills before they can comfortably assume their new roles in teaching (Renandya, 2011). However, it may not be so easy for teachers to articulate the roles they play in their classes. This reveals one of the reasons for choosing metaphor analysis to find out how language teachers conceptualize their roles in language classes.

When the literature in this context is examined, it could be seen that researchers from different countries and cultures investigating teachers' roles through metaphors gathered data from different groups, such as pre-service teachers (Lin et al., 2012), students and teachers (Oktay & Vancı Osam, 2013; Wan, Low, & Li, 2011), practicing teachers (Michael & Katerina, 2009; Torghabeh, Elahi, & Khanalipour, 2009; Yesilbursa, 2012), and students (Nikitina & Furouka, 2008).

The main concern of these studies was to find out how EFL teachers' roles were conceptualized by various parties through metaphorical analysis. Metaphors produced by different parties and themes used to categorize the metaphors showed variation in many studies. While 'nurturer' was among the most popular roles in the study of Lin et al. (2012) and Wan et al. (2011), 'gardener' and 'guide' were dominant metaphors for Greek teachers (Michael & Katerina, 2009). The popularity of metaphors explaining teachers' roles even differed for participants in the same study. For instance, 'teacher as instructor' and 'culture transmitter' were the most popular metaphorical themes for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> year English language teaching (ELT) students, whereas the prevalent ones for teachers were 'provider', 'nurturer', and 'interest arouser' (Michael & Katerina, 2009). Especially, the dominance of conceptualizations perceiving teachers as nurturers were reported to indicate that teachers' views were more student-centered. Therefore, their conceptualizations about teaching are supposed to be rooted in their past personal and school experiences which could have shaped their thoughts.

Besides, teachers' conceptualizations concerning their roles showed difference according to their personal and professional perceptions. In general, they defined themselves as 'parent', 'friend', 'savior', 'entertainer', 'balanced', and 'guard'. However, professionally they considered themselves as 'researcher', 'reflective', 'visionary', 'sculptor', 'expert', 'gardener', and 'public servant and manager' (Michael & Katerina, 2009). This exemplifies how teachers actually possess and realize different roles both personally and professionally.

Students' metaphoric conceptualizations regarding their teachers' roles in Nikitina and Furouka's study (2008) were in accordance with those of the teachers in Lin et al. (2012) and Wan et al. (2011). Although they used different metaphors to define teachers' roles, main theme was 'teacher as caretaker' with metaphors like 'mother', 'parent', and 'nanny'. The second most popular theme was 'teacher as essential element' with such metaphors as 'vitamin', 'sunshine', and 'computer operating

system'. Teachers were also considered as 'giver' represented via metaphors as 'candle', 'ant', 'plant, or animal'. This shows that both practicing teachers and students are inclined to see teachers as part of their family and as someone caring for them.

Among many other studies, De Guerrero and Villamil (2001) also explored teachers' roles through metaphors and created a nine-category classification including roles as 'cooperative leader', 'provider of knowledge', 'challenger or agent of change', 'nurturer', 'innovator', 'artist', 'repairer', and 'gym instructor'. They concluded that teachers tend to identify themselves through traditional teaching roles which were thought to reflect the effects of teachers' individual trajectories in their teaching. Taking the variety of the metaphorical conceptualizations in mind, their study was claimed to reveal the complexity of EFL teaching. Despite the variety, they suggested that links need to be established between metaphorical conceptions of teachers' roles and their actual teaching in EFL classes.

When it comes to research in Turkish context, studies seem to be limited (Oktay & Osam, 2013; Saban, 2004; Saban et al., 2006, 2007; Yeşilbursa, 2012). In their study Saban et al. (2006) put metaphors into ten categories as 'knowledge provider', 'molder', 'repairer', 'superior authority figure', 'change agent', 'entertainer', archetype of spirit', 'nurturer', 'facilitator', and 'cooperative democratic leader'. Yeşilbursa's (2012) categorization was almost the same. In her study, only the categories of 'frustration', 'novice', and 'flexible' were added to that of Saban et al. (2006). While conceptualizations like 'teacher as a guide' and 'flexible and nurturer' were prevalent in Yeşilbursa's (2012) study, the dominant themes were 'teacher as knowledge provider' and 'teacher as molder' in Saban et al. (2006) representing the idea that teachers are masters and they have the responsibility to shape students. In their study, Oktay and Osam (2013) investigated teacher roles through metaphors used by students and teachers. The results revealed that metaphors, such as 'conductor', 'shopkeeper', and 'entertainer' were popular. Their study also showed that students preferred a learner-centered approach, while teachers preferred more teacher-centered approach. As seen, despite previous research, it is obvious that more supplementary research, specifically focusing on Turkish EFL teachers' roles, is required.

## 1.2. Research questions

Keeping the aforementioned issues in mind, this study was conducted to uncover a group of Turkish EFL teachers' use of metaphorical images regarding their roles, thus to answer the question; *how do EFL teachers conceptualize their roles through metaphors?* Within the question, it is aimed to;

- *identify* the metaphors that the EFL teachers use to define their roles
- *elucidate* the *theoretical assumptions about teaching* reflected in these metaphors.

## 2. Method

As stated, this study aimed to find how a group of EFL teachers teaching at different levels in different parts of Turkey conceptualized their roles through metaphors. While doing this, the study also aimed to elucidate the underlying theoretical assumption regarding their understandings of teaching. To this aim, self-reporting was thought to be appropriate because it provides a kind of window on participants' inner states. Though it may be criticized for providing inaccurate data in the case of participants' untrue reporting, it is still the only way to find out research participants' mental processing (Chamot, 2004). It is believed to give the teachers flexibility to elaborate upon what their roles are and could be rather than restricting them to some possible roles provided by the researchers. It was also important to reveal likely new roles that have not been mentioned before.

## 2.1. Sample / Participants

The study gathered data from 24 teachers teaching at different levels in different parts of Turkey. A detailed analysis of their profile is presented below (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Teachers' demographic profile

Label	Category	<i>f</i>
Age	21-25	11
	26-30	13
Degree	BA	23
	MA	1
Major	ELT	24
Type of school	Public	18
	Private	6
Unit of teaching	Pre-school	2
	Primary school key-stage I	4
	Primary school key-stage II	14
	Primary school key stage III	9
Average number of students	0-20	6
	21-30	12
	31-40	6
Average workload (weekly hours)	5-10	3
	11-15	2
	16-20	3
	21-25	4
	26-30	10

The participants included 14 female and 10 male teachers. They had less than 6 years of experience in teaching. Their ages ranged from 21 to 30. Only one of them had masters' degree. All the others were graduates of ELT department of different universities in Turkey. Except for 6 teachers teaching at private schools, the rest was teaching at public schools. Since some teachers taught at different stages in the same school, there were some overlaps between teaching levels. 2 of them were teaching at private pre-schools. Most of the other teachers were teaching at primary school-key stage II (n=14). The rest was teaching at primary school-key stage III, and primary school-key stage I. The average number of students in their classes changed between 21 and 30. However, number of the teachers having up to 20 students or more than 30 students was equal. The number of students in the teachers' classes might be a factor shaping their conceptualizations of roles since roles for a teacher teaching to a small or a large group would definitely not be the same. Therefore, their teaching practices could change accordingly, so do their conceptualizations. Last but not the least, despite changing between 10 and 25, most of the teachers' weekly workload varied between 26 and 30 hours.

## 2.2. Instrument(s)

As for data collection, similar to what has been done in many other metaphor studies (see De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, 2002; Eren & Tekinarslan, 2013; Kalra & Bajeva, 2012; Wan et al., 2011), the researchers designed and used a metaphor elicitation task in which, there were two sections, one gathering basic demographic information, the other eliciting the teachers' conceptualization of their

roles through the statement “*An English teacher is like ..... because.....*”. As can be seen in the statement, the teachers were asked to provide their own conceptualizations regarding their roles. Through their metaphors, the researchers also aimed to elucidate the reason behind the teachers’ conceptualizations. The elicitation was structured since defining their roles either in a couple of or many words might be challenging. However, it should also be kept in mind that eliciting the teachers’ conceptualizations regarding their roles completely may not be possible, but the data surely be indicative of their thoughts with regard to themselves.

### 2.3. Data collection procedures

The data were collected during 2014-2015 academic year. So as to assure the workability of the data collection tool, the researchers firstly piloted the metaphor elicitation task with two teachers having similar profile to the teachers in the main study. The teachers contributing to the piloting were especially asked to report the clarity and responder-friendliness of the tool. They were also asked to report if there was any incomprehensibility in the task. Having received feedback from the piloting, the researchers fine-tuned the elicitation task, and proceeded to data collection.

The participants responded to the metaphor elicitation task through the statement “*An English teacher is like ..... because.....*”. They were asked to provide as many statements as possible. The teachers contributing to data collection were actually friends to the researchers from their school years. For this reason, when they were contacted for the study, they consented to respond to the task. After the researchers thought that they reached an adequate number of teachers, they sent the metaphor elicitation task mostly through the participants’ social media accounts. A deadline was also set to this first message, and the participants were requested to keep up with it. A reminder was also sent to the teachers to encourage them to respond. Although most of the tasks were elicited till the deadline, for the ones missing the deadline, the researchers set some extra time. When they were also received, the data collection was over, and the researchers continued with the coding process which is narrated below.

### 2.4. Data analysis

At this point of data coding and analysis, first of all, all the metaphors produced by the teachers were separated as *units of analysis* and *explanations*. Then, they were put in a list (naming stage). Following this stage, all the raw data were gone through in order to determine salient and common metaphors. At this stage, expressions with no mention of a metaphor and expressions of a metaphor without rationale were eliminated. 58 well-articulated metaphors and explanations were ready to be organized into particular conceptual themes. Thus, similar metaphors were brought together and put into an appropriate role category provided by De Guerrero and Villamil (2000). Therefore, the analysis was based on deductive, theory-driven understanding. The categorization provided by De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) includes 9 role categories, namely; *cooperative leader, knowledge provider, challenger/agent of change, nurturer, innovator, provider of tools, artist, repairer, and gym instructor*. However, it was realized that metaphors and rationales gained through the data only matched to 6 out of 9 categories. Therefore, the role categories which did not match to the data were disregarded from the categorization. As for the metaphors which could not match any of the categories of De Guerrero and Villamil, a new role category emerged and was named as *learner*. Thus, through the analysis, 7 role categories were achieved.

In this process, in the beginning, the researchers separately analyzed and categorized the metaphors. Following this stage, a consensus was reached through constant negotiations. As a final step, in order to determine the prevalent role categories, frequencies and percentages were calculated.

### 3. Results

As previously stated, the current research primarily examines a group of EFL teachers' conceptualizations of their roles through metaphor analysis. Based on the metaphors, the study also aims to elucidate the theoretical assumptions regarding teaching reflected in the metaphors.

The results gained through the analysis regarding the teachers' conceptualizations of their roles are given below (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Teachers' conceptualizations of their roles through metaphors

Role Category	Metaphors	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Knowledge provider</b>	Presenter, model, light to enlighten, light (2), candle, sun, star, computer, modem, Google, resource, dictionary (5)	17	29
<b>Nurturer</b>	Mother/father/parent (4), someone in the family (2), ant, gardener, doctor, kinder garden teacher, the environment, pen	12	21
<b>Cooperative leader</b>	Guide (3), football coach, orchestra leader (3), prompter, facilitator, organizer, scaffold	11	19
<b>Artist</b>	An actor/actress (4), a clown, magician	6	10
<b>Challenger/Agent of change</b>	Person breaking taboos, culture transmitter, bridge, independence, the best of the best	5	9
<b>Innovator</b>	A sweet alien/Explorer (3), researcher	4	7
<b>Learner</b>	Pupil, tourist, a new person	3	5
<b>Total</b>		58	100

As the table shows, for most of them being a teacher was conceptualized as being *knowledge provider*. Although, the teachers' conceptualizations of their selves varied from being *a presenter* to *computer*, the key metaphors within the category, such as *dictionary*, *presenter*, and *light* enabled the researchers to interpret that the teachers mainly tended to define themselves as *knowledge provider*.

Similarly, some other metaphors produced by the teachers revealed that they conceptualized themselves as *nurturer*. The main metaphoric conceptualizations in this category perceiving teacher as *mother*, *father*, or *parent* also suggest how teachers see learners.

In another similar categorization, the teachers were seen to conceptualize their professional selves as *cooperative leaders*. Metaphors, such as *football coach*, *orchestra leader*, or *guide* were among the metaphorical conceptualizations indicating their leadership.

Besides the prevalent traditional conceptualizations, though being relatively less frequent, some contemporary conceptualizations were also seen to emerge. For instance, *teacher as an artist* could indicate the shift from a traditional understanding to a more contemporary humanistic understanding which shows that the teachers conceptualized teaching as art since it densely involves creation or recreation of knowledge and skills.

Another conceptualization is teacher as *challenger/agent of change*. Though relatively less frequently produced, teacher as *agent of change* was thought to be someone who transforms things into something new. *Bridge*, *culture transmitter*, and *person breaking taboos* were among the metaphors produced in this category.

Represented with some metaphors like *alien*, *explorer*, and *researcher*, the teachers were also seen to conceptualize themselves as *innovator*. Similarly, though very few in number, the metaphors that did not fit into the categorization of De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) were put into a new category,

and named as *learner*. Thus, the teachers' conceptualizations also showed that, although to very few of the teachers, they saw themselves as learners.

Interpretations regarding these categorizations and if and how the results match or mismatch to the related body of literature are provided in the following section.

#### 4. Discussion

As presented in the section above, for most of the teachers being a teacher was conceptualized as being *knowledge provider*. Although, the teachers' conceptualizations of their selves varied from being a *presenter* to *computer*, the key metaphors within the category, such as *dictionary*, *presenter*, and *light* enabled the researchers to interpret that the teachers mainly tended to define themselves as *knowledge provider*. In line with some other studies (see Leavy, McSorley, & Bote, 2007; Saban et al., 2006), the findings show that the prevalent theoretical assumptions reflected through the conceptualizations of their roles are predominantly behaviorist notions of teaching indicating that being a teacher is seen as mechanically transmitting knowledge to students. Thus, the teachers perceived themselves as knowledge transmitters and learners as mere recipient of knowledge. Furthermore, as stated by Leavy et al. (2007), this type of conceptualization suggests the tendency to see knowledge as an externally determined product rather than something that is integrated into learners' prior knowledge and constructed into a new unity. Additionally, conceptualization of teacher as *knowledge provider* also shows the optimism to see teaching as something simple rather than a profession requiring high level of expertise and competency. In their categorization De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) conclude that conceptualizing the teacher as knowledge provider indicates that teaching is seen as providing knowledge of language to learners. Additionally, another perspective suggested by Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) asserts that seeing themselves as providers also shows the nature of classroom interaction which is dominantly from teachers to students.

Complementarily, the teachers were also found to conceptualize themselves as *nurturer*. In line with some other studies (see Alger, 2009; Lin et al., 2012; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Oxford et al., 1998; Yesilbursa, 2012), and also not that much different from being knowledge provider, perception of being nurturer also reveals that the teachers tended to have a traditional, teacher-centered point of view. This also shows that they mostly saw themselves as somebody nourishing, affecting, and developing learners' capabilities. The main metaphoric conceptualizations in this category perceiving teacher as *mother*, *father*, or *parent* also suggest how teachers see learners. This shows that the main representation of learners refers to a dependent type of learner who is taken care by teachers rather than being the active constructor of his or her own learning. Additionally, as found in Thomas and Beauchamp's (2011) study, conceptualization of teacher as a mother, father, or parents also indicates how the teachers interacted with their students. Therefore, very close to knowledge providers, as nurturers the teachers seemed to have teacher-centered interaction with their students.

Besides, the teachers' conceptualizations of their professional selves and roles as *knowledge providers* and *nurturers* seem to match to the roles provided by Harmer (2007), where teachers are defined as kind of walking resource centers ready to offer help, or provide learners with what they lack. Also, as Harmer further suggests, being the resource also indicates that teachers need to guide to some extent, however, it does not necessarily mean that they are to spoon-feed learners. Similarly, as Harden and Crosby (2000) reported being provider could also reveal that the teachers saw themselves as responsible for passing on information to their students. Thus, they could have perceived themselves as experts.



In another similar categorization, the teachers were seen to conceptualize their professional selves as *cooperative leaders*. Similar to what De Guerrero and Villamil (2000, 2002) concluded, seeing themselves as leaders could suggest that the teachers tended to adopt the role to care for their students and to direct their learning process, including whats and hows of their learning. Therefore, if they are cooperating leaders, than they are responsible for motivating, encouraging, and inspiring their students to achieve their potentials. Besides, the tendency to see themselves as cooperating leaders, despite being superior, the teachers also acknowledged that they were jointly involved in the learning and teaching adventure with their students. However, the conceptualization does not merely mean that the teachers did not attach any responsibility to their students. Cooperating can also suggest that the teachers let their students assume responsibility for their own learning. Additionally, this might indicate that for some of the teachers, traditional, teacher-centered understanding was replaced with a more humanistic and contemporary understanding as cooperating rather than leading. This might mean that the teachers thought that they needed to care for the affective and motivational side of their learners rather than merely dominating them. Then again, as suggested by De Guerrero and Villamil (2000, 2002), it still suggests that the teachers conceptualize learners with some degree of dependence.

As concluded in Alger's (2009) study, the theoretical assumption of teaching reflected through the three most frequently produced metaphors, namely teacher as *knowledge provider*, *nurturer*, and *cooperative leader*, shows the traditional and teacher-centered understanding of teaching which could have stemmed from the teachers' own learning experiences coming from their school years.

Besides the prevalent traditional conceptualizations, though being relatively less frequent, some contemporary conceptualizations were also seen to emerge. For instance, *teacher as an artist* could indicate the shift from a traditional understanding to a more contemporary humanistic understanding which shows that the teachers conceptualized teaching as art since it densely involves creation or recreation of knowledge and skills.

Another conceptualization is teacher as the *challenger/agent of change*. Though relatively less frequently produced, teacher as agent of change was thought to be someone who transforms things into something new. This might suggest that teachers scaffold the change in learners' intellectual and academic skills. Additionally, as a challenger, a teacher challenges the process leading to change in learners' professional and personal selves. Thus, it also suggests that the teachers saw themselves as providers of new perspectives.

Last, but not the least, the teachers' conceptualization of their role as innovator could also show that not surprisingly, they were aware of the need that teaching profession changes so their practices need to change as well. Similarly, though very few in number, the metaphors that did not fit into the categorization of De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) were put into a new category, and named as *learner*. Thus, the teachers' conceptualizations also showed that, although to very few of the teachers, they saw themselves as learners. Being the least frequent metaphor, for sure, cannot make this category the least important. The current understanding of teaching makes it a life-long profession with an emphasis on the need to keep up with the recent changes and developments in teaching profession. Therefore, this indicates that the teachers were open to new practices in teaching.

## 5. Conclusions

Setting out to reveal a group of EFL teachers' conceptualizations of their roles through metaphor analysis, this study showed the variety indicating the multi-facetedness of teaching profession. The metaphors ranging from teacher as *knowledge provider* to teacher as *learner* show the complexity in conceptualizing their selves as teachers. The teachers' perceptions regarding their professional roles

also suggest many different roles that they actually fulfill in their day-to-day teaching practices. However, the dominance of traditional, teacher-centered metaphors and categorizations might reveal that the teachers associated their classroom practices, experiences to their previous experiences in some way. Therefore, the metaphors emerged from the data could indicate that the teachers' personal preferences, attitudes, and understandings were also shaped by their own personal and professional experiences. Thus, the teachers' individual learning and teaching trajectories could have shaped their conceptualizations of their professional selves. However, there is still a point that needs to be emphasized. For a more contemporary, learner-centered understanding, there needs to be a shift from teacher-centered practices to learner-centered ones. Only in that case, could it be possible to shape future teachers' conceptualizations of teachers' roles.

Keeping the conclusions in mind, the study is not free from limitations. Despite participants' variations in teaching experience and their schools' locations, still the number of participants was rather limited. It could have been possible to find out more and also different metaphors representing participants' views with a larger sample and with a wider age range. For future research, it could be insightful to investigate metaphorical conceptualizations with regard to demographic information like teaching experience, gender, or teaching level. Students' conceptualizations of teachers' roles could also be investigated to shed more light on teachers' roles.

## References

- Alger, C. L. (2009). Secondary teachers' conceptual metaphors of teaching and learning: Changes over the career span. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 743-751.
- Barcelos, A. M. F. (2003). Researching beliefs about SLA: A critical review. In Kalaja, P., Barcelos, A.M.F. (Eds.), *Beliefs about SLA: New Research Approaches* (pp. 7-33). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher.
- Boostrom, R., (1998). 'Safe spaces': Reflections on an educational metaphor. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 30, 397-408.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy second edition*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Chamot, A. U. (2004). Issues in language learning strategy research and teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1(1), 14-26.
- De Guerrero, M. C. M., & Villamil, O. S. (2000). Exploring ESL teachers' roles through metaphor analysis. *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)*, 34 (2), 341-351.
- De Guerrero, M. C., & Villamil, O. S. (2001). Metaphor analysis in second/foreign language instruction: A sociocultural perspective. Revised version of paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Applied Linguistics, St. Louis, MO, February 24- 27.
- De Guerrero, M. C., & Villamil, O. S. (2002). Metaphorical conceptualizations of EFL teaching and learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 6 (2), 95-120.
- Eren, A., & Tekinarslan, E. (2013). Prospective teachers' metaphors: Teacher, teaching, learning, instructional material and evaluation concepts. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 3(2), 435-445.
- Fainsilber, L., & Ortony, A. (1987). Metaphorical uses of language in the expression of emotion. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 2, 239-250.

- Fenwick, T. (2000). Adventure guides, outfitters, firestarters, and caregivers: Continuing educators' images of identity. *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education*, 26 (1), 53-77.
- Gibbs, R. W. (1994). *The poetics of mind*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldstein, L. S. (2005). Becoming a teacher as a hero's journey: Using metaphor in pre-service teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 32 (1), 7-24.
- Hammadou, J. A., & Bernhardt, E. (1987). On being and becoming a foreign language teacher. *Theory into Practice*, 26, 301-306.
- Harden, R. M., & Crosby, J. R. (2000). The good teacher is more than a lecturer-the twelve roles of the teacher. AMEE Medical Education Guide, 20. *Medical Teacher*, 22(4), 334-347.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Longman
- Jensen, D.F.N. (2006). Metaphors as a bridge to understanding educational and social Contexts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 1-17.
- Kalra, M. B., & Bajeva, B. (2012). Teacher thinking about knowledge, learning and learners: A metaphor analysis. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 55, 317-326.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Leavy, A. M., McSorley, F. A., & Bote, L. A. (2007). An examination of what metaphor construction reveals about the evolution of pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 1217-1233.
- Lin, W. C., Paichi, P. S., & Shu, C. Y. (2012). Exploring personal EFL teaching metaphors in pre-service teacher education, *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 11(1), 183-199.
- Michael, K., & Katerina, M. (2009). Exploring Greek teachers' beliefs using metaphors. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 34(2), 63-83.
- Miller, S. (1987). Some comments on the utility of metaphors for educational theory and practice. *Educational Theory*, 37, 219-227.
- Moser, K. S. (2000). Metaphor analysis in psychology: method, theory, and fields of application. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research [On-line journal]*, 1(2). Available from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-00/2-00moser-e.htm>.
- Munby, H. (1986). Metaphor in the thinking of teachers: An exploratory study. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 18 (2), 197-209.
- Nikitina, L., & Furuoka, F. (2008). "A language teacher is like...": examining Malaysian students' perceptions of language teachers through metaphor analysis. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 5(2), 192-205.
- Oksanen, J. (2005). Students' beliefs about themselves as users of Finnish, Swedish and English: analysis of metaphorical constructions. Unpublished MA thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
- Oktay, Y. B., & Vancı Osam, Ü. (2013) Viewing foreign language teachers' roles through the eyes of teachers and students, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi [H. U. Journal of Education]* 44, 249-261.
- Ortony, A. (1975). Why metaphors are necessary and not just nice. *Educational Theory*, 25, 45-53.

- Ortony, A., & Fainsilber, L. (1989). The role of metaphors in descriptions of emotions. In Yorick Wilks (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in natural language processing* (pp. 181-184). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Oxford, R. T., S. Barcelos, A., Harrington, C., Lavine, R. Z., Saleh, A., & Longhini, A. (1998). Clashing metaphors about classroom teachers: Toward a systematic typology for the language teaching field, *System* 26(1), 3-50.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: clearing up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62 (3), 307-32.
- Pishghadam, R., Rajabali, A. T., & Safoora, N. (2009). Metaphor analysis of teachers' beliefs and conceptions of language teaching and learning in Iranian high schools and language institutes: A qualitative study, *Iranian EFL Journal*, 4, 6-40.
- Renandya, W.A. (2011). Teacher roles in EIL. Paper presented at the English Department, Faculty of Language and Literature, Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga.
- Saban, A. (2004). Prospective classroom teachers' metaphorical images of selves and comparing them to those they have of their elementary and cooperating teachers. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 24 (6), 617-635.
- Saban, A., Koçbeker B. N., & Saban, A. (2006). An investigation of the concept of teacher among prospective teachers through metaphor analysis. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 6(2), 509-522.
- Saban, A., Kocbeker, B. N., & Saban, A. (2007). Prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning revealed through metaphor analysis. *Learning and Instruction*, 17(2), 123-139.
- Torghabeh, R.A., Elahi, M., & Khanalipour, S. (2009). Examining Iranian EFL learners' and teachers' beliefs about teachers through metaphor analysis. *Iranian EFL Journal*, 5, 115-138.
- Turunen, P. (2003). Metaphorical expressions used by university students about themselves as learners of English and about their teachers. Unpublished MA thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
- Wan. W., Low, G. D., & Li, M. (2012). From students' and teachers' perspectives: Metaphor analysis of beliefs about EFL teachers' roles. *System*, 39, 403-415.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, V. H., Sundberg, C. W., Yarbrough, S., Wilson, E., & Stallworth, B. J. (2003). Construction of teaching metaphors through the use of technology. *Electronic Journal for the Integration of Technology in Education*, 2 (1), 2-22.
- Yesilbursa, A. (2012). Using metaphor to explore the professional role identities of higher education English language instructors. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 468-472.

## Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretmenlerin rollerini metafor analizi yoluyla kavramsallaştırmaları

---

### Öz

Metaforlar insanların düşünme ve dünyayı algılamalarını yansıtır. Öğretmenlik mesleğinde düşünüldüklerinde, öğretmenlerin meslekleri hakkındaki görüşlerini yansıtan güçlü göstergeler olabilirler. Öğretmenlerin kendileri ile ilişkilendirdikleri anlamı da ortaya çıkarabilirler. Öğretmenlerin kendilerini nasıl kavramsallaştırdıkları noktasındaki önemine rağmen, yapılan çalışma sayısı oldukça düşüktür. Bu nedenle bu çalışma metaforik tanımlamalarla yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretmenlerin kendi rolleri hakkında ne düşündüklerini ortaya çıkarmak için kurgulanmıştır. Farklı deneyimlere sahip 24 İngilizce öğretmeni, "*Bir İngilizce öğretmeni ..... gibidir çünkü.....*" ifadesini içeren ölçeği doldürmüştür. Veri, De Guerrero ve Villamil'in (2000) ortaya çıkardığı ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretmen rolleri sınıflandırmasına göre analiz edilmiştir. Bu nedenle, teori temelli çıkarımsal içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Analiz, verinin De Guerrero ve Villamil'in sınıflandırmasındaki 9 kategorisinden yalnızca 6 kategorisi ile örtüştüğünü ortaya koymuştur. Bu sınıflandırmaya uygun düşmeyen metaforlar için yeni bir kategori ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmenlerin öğretmeyle ilgili yorumlarını ve felsefelerini ortaya çıkaran metaforlar, öğretmenlerin kendi rollerini daha çok geleneksel ve öğretmen merkezli gördüklerini göstermiştir. Metaforlardaki çeşitlilik öğretmenin sürekli dinamik yapısını göstermektedir.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Metafor; yabancı dil olarak İngilizce; öğretmen rolü; öğretmen eğitimi; öğretmenlerin inançları

---

### AUTHOR BIODATA

Mehmet Asmalı (PhD) is an EFL instructor at Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, School of Foreign Languages, Balıkesir / Bandırma, Turkey. He holds Ph.D. in English Language Teaching (Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Çanakkale, Turkey). Mehmet Asmalı is interested in English Language Teaching, cross-cultural pragmatics, teacher education, and individual differences in language learning.

Handan Çelik (PhD) is an EFL instructor at Trakya University Rectorate Foreign Languages Department, Turkey. Her research interests include pre-service and in-service English language teacher education, teaching ESP/EAP, and English language teaching program evaluation.